

DIT DA JOW

Making Kung-Fu's Liquid Gold

If you study kung-fu, and especially iron palm, you'll no doubt suffer your share of bumps and bruises. For thousands of years, practitioners have turned to the magic cure-all known as dit da jow.

By Brian Gray

There are many different recipes for dit da jow, which often comes as a surprise for beginners. But when one understands that dit da jow is merely an adjective and not a product name, much like the word "toothpaste," then the picture becomes clearer. When one thinks of toothpaste, one may think of several brands, and while one may have more abrasives for cleaning, and another may have more breath freshener, they are still called toothpaste. So it is with dit da jow, and those brands that you may buy vary from very weak and clear looking to so potent that you can watch a bruise literally disappear as you apply the liniment. I have seen dit da jow that was actually that strong.

Dit da jow is a collection of herbs which is specially prepared in a base of wine. In this liquid, one could put anywhere from three or four to 100 different herbs, and it would still be dit da jow as long as the herbs used were from those which prevent blood stagnation, promote blood circulation, tonify the blood, and reduce pain and swelling induced by trauma. There are a large number of these herbs, so, for practical purposes, only a few of them are used in any given recipe. People who make claims that their recipe is the best, because they have more herbs in theirs, are being foolish. It is not the number of herbs, but the specific combination of certain herbs that makes a superior liniment. If someone is going to make a claim that his recipe is better, I want to see scientific evidence showing why his combination of herbs is better. Simply quoting numbers, such as 20 vs. ten, is as foolish as saying making bread with more ingredients makes it better.

To better understand dit da jow, first, let's do some translating. The two most popular dialects of Chinese used here in the United States are Cantonese and Mandarin. The words *dit da jow* are Cantonese; for Mandarin one

says, *tieh da jiu*. Tone levels are important in Chinese, since a given word may be pronounced the same as several other words, but the tonal level will change its meaning; thus, the wrong tonal level will change what the speaker says.

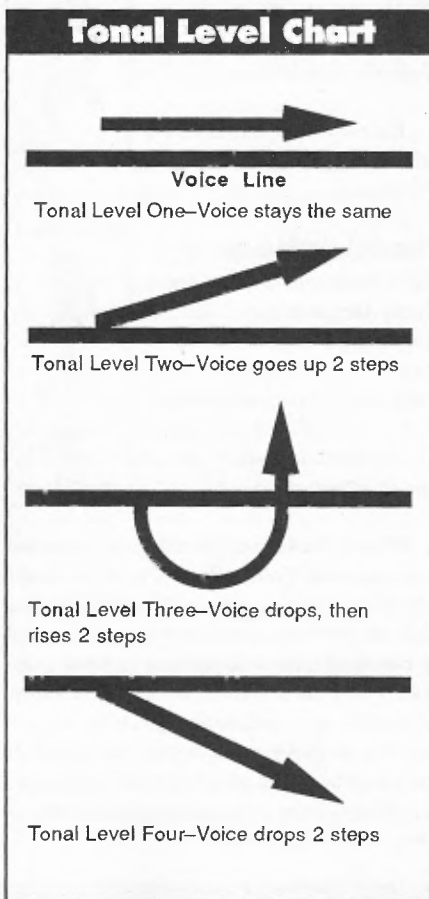
As an example, the word "yee" can mean the number "one," or it can mean "mind," simply depending on which of four tonal levels one uses. So, if you want to go into a Chinese herb shop and buy dit da jow, you will immensely

help yourself if you know how to pronounce it. Tonal levels are similar in sound to what we call inflection, that is, the way we raise or lower the emphasis on certain parts of a word, or sentence, to change the meaning. An example is the word, "Yeah." Yeah? is spoken differently from yeah! In the first one, yeah?, we raise the voice two steps. In the second, we lower the voice two steps, yeah! Understanding this, look at the tonal level chart I have provided and find tonal level three. That is the tonal level for each of the three words comprising dit da jow. Since one would sound funny saying three, third tonal levels in a row, on the words "dit da," one makes the two words receive only one tonal level, and the word "jow," receives a tonal level by itself. Thus, one pronounces the words this way:

The image shows two sets of tonal level symbols. The first set, labeled 'DIT DA JOW', consists of three upward-curving arcs. The second set, labeled 'TIEH DA JIU', consists of four upward-curving arcs.

I have written these words in character form so that you may learn to write them. Dit, or tieh, means "iron." Da, means "hit." Jow, or jiu, means "wine." Thus, dit da jow means "iron hit wine," a liniment based in wine that is used in the striking practice of the iron palm and other iron-incorporating practices. It is easier to simply go out and buy dit da jow already made, but, some prefer making their own, so let's move on to putting together the recipe.

Once you have selected the herbs that you are going to use for your recipe (we will discuss which herbs to use later), crush them into a coarse powder. Do not grind them down to a fine powder; the powder should be coarse to keep the powder from adhering to itself. Place one ounce of each herb into a large, non-metallic cooking pot, and add one quart of vodka. Simmer slowly over a low fire for three-and-a-half hours. Remove from heat and pour contents



vodka. Seal the mixture in an air-tight jar. Store this in a cool, dark place for at least two months, preferably one year, as the longer it ages, the more potent it becomes.

Some people vary on how many ounces of herb they use per gallon of dit da jow, with the average being between three-fifths of an ounce to two ounces per gallon. Also, some recipes will vary the ounces from herb to herb, so that one recipe may call for one ounce of t'ioen ch'i, yet two ounces of ru hsiang, and so forth. You are free to experiment, but remember, there are basically three types of herbal properties that must be balanced in your recipe. Be careful of having too many of one type. The three types are: those that reduce pain so that one can withstand stronger striking practice; those that stimulate blood circulation to help the chi flow; and those that break up blood clots that arise from bruising the skin. Now the ingredients.

Red peony root

Radix Paeonia Rubra—Latin
Ch'ih Shou—Chinese

It is used to remove stagnated blood and eliminate evil heat from blood, for the treatment of pain due to blood stasis and acute inflammation.

Dragon's blood

Sanguis Draconis—Latin
Shweh Jin, or Shweh Jie—Chinese

It is used to remove blood stasis, to relieve pains, and to promote the healing of traumatic wounds and bleeding. The drug consists of a red resin secreted from the fruit of *Daemonorops draco* Blume.

Cat-tail pollen

Pollen Typhae—Latin
Pu Huang—Chinese

It is used to promote the circulation of blood and relieve pain by eliminating blood stasis. The carbonized drug is used as hemostatic for all kinds of bleeding.

Myrrh

Myrrha, Resina Myrrhae—Latin
Mei Yao, or Mo Yao—Chinese

It is used to relieve pain and swelling due to blood stasis or trauma.

Pseudoginseng

Gynura Pinatifida
Radix Pseudoginseng—Latin
T'ien Ch'i—Chinese

It prevents blood stasis by breaking up blood clots and stopping internal bleeding.

Safflower

Flos Carthami—Latin
Hung Hua—Chinese

It is used to stimulate blood flow and relieve pain by removing stagnated blood. It also removes pain of traumatic wounds, and is used for treatment of painful swellings due to blood stasis.

Frankincense

Mastix, Olibanum
Resina Olibani
Boswellia Glabra—Latin
Ru Hsiang—Chinese

It is used to relieve pain and swelling by invigorating blood circulation, for the treatment of pains due to blood stasis and traumatic pains.

Chinese angelica root

Radix Angelicae Sinensis—Latin
Dang Gwei—Chinese

It is used to nourish the blood and to invigorate the blood circulation.

Aucklandia root

Radix Saussuræ lappae Clarke
Radix Aucklandiae
Aucklandia lappa Decne—Latin
Guang Mu Hsiang—Chinese

It is used as a pain reliever and an antispasmodic.

The nine herbs that I have listed may be used to make a very potent dit da jow, and they are non-poisonous, so no harm will come if they are ingested. But the herbs I list now, when added to the other nine, will produce an even more potent formula and are poisonous. Therefore, when making your dit da jow, you have to be the one who decides on a poisonous or non-poisonous formula. If you are going to add the herbs that follow, remember to keep it out of cuts and away from your mouth.

田
七

紅
花

乳
香

當
歸

廣
木
香

Prunus Persica—Latin
Tao Ren—Chinese

Promotes circulation and dissolve clots.

Clove tree

Syzygium Aromaticum
Flos Caryophylli
Eugenia Caryophyllata—Latin
Ding Xiang—Chinese

The oil of the cloves is an excellent local anaesthetic; the drug promotes circulation.

Rhubarb

Rheum Officinale
Radix et Rhizoma Rhei—Latin
Da Huang—Chinese

Removes blood stagnation caused by traumatic injury. The powdered herb applied to burns relieves pain and swelling.

Borneo camphor tree

Dryobalanops Aromatica
Dryobalanops Camphora
Borneolum—Latin
Lung Nao Xiang
Bing Pian—Chinese

It is used as an aromatic for the treatment of loss of consciousness. Reduces and alleviates pain.

Horse coin or horse money

Ma Ch'ien—Chinese

This herb will remain somewhat of a mystery since I lack a Latin definition. It is the most poisonous of all the herbs I have listed, and I was taught that it makes the dit da jow much more potent by its presence.

Dit da jow is not used solely for iron palm practice. It is a medication with numerous other uses, all of which relate to the blood. If you will notice, I have given, beside each herb listed, the function of each herb in this recipe. These various functions are what can be obtained from using this formula of dit da jow when applied to affected areas. As an example, I will relate an incident.

I had received a scratch while playing with one of my dogs, and it became infected. Although I had washed the scratch, I should have disinfected it, but I ignored it thinking it was minor.

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香

大
黃

龍
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冰
片
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馬
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